

PROCEDURE FOR THE ASSESSMENT
of proposed degree programs *submitted to the Minister of Education,
Recreation and Sports for the purpose of obtaining funding
and*

CRITERIA OF RELEVANCE
used by the **Comité des programmes universitaires**

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➔ 1 INTRODUCTION

Universities seeking funding for new programs must first have the quality of those programs evaluated by the Commission d'évaluation des projets de programmes (CEP — Committee for the Evaluation of Program Proposals), a committee of the Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec (CREPUQ — Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities.) The next step is to submit the programs to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport for an assessment of their *relevance*.

The legal rights and obligations of the Ministère require this step¹, which is necessary prior to a decision to fund a new program².

The Ministère assesses three aspects of the proposed program: its socioeconomic or cultural relevance, its relevance to the education system and its relevance to the institution proposing it. For each aspect, the Ministère proposes criteria to be considered by the Comité des programmes universitaires (CPU — Committee on University Programs).

This document outlines the procedure for assessing degree programs as well as the criteria that inform the work of the CPU.

The Ministère regularly updates the Dictionnaire des programmes universitaires (its list of university programs), which is drawn from its GDEU database (Gestion des données sur l'effectif universitaire – its system for the management of university enrollment data). It goes without saying that new programs entered on this list must have received the Minister's authorization for funding³.

Universities will receive a request for information about any programs for which funding has not been authorized. Indeed, if universities do not provide proper justification, they may not be funded for students enrolled in these programs.

1. "For the carrying out of his duties, the Minister may, in particular: . . . grant financial assistance out of the sums put at his disposal for that purpose, subject to the conditions he sees fit." (*Education Act*, R.S.Q., chapter M-15, section 1.3, subsection 2).

2. 'Students enrolled in programs leading to bachelor's, master's or doctoral degrees for which funding has not been authorized by the Minister will not be granted funding.' (Budgetary rule under *Activités admissibles au financement*.)

3. Universities also send the Ministère what they consider to be modifications to the Dictionnaire des programmes universitaires (e.g. updates and reorganization of existing programs). This information helps ensure continued funding based on student enrollment in modified programs. The CREPUQ is regularly informed when programs have been modified.

⇒ 2 NEW PROGRAM

A new program proposal submitted to the CEP by a university⁴ is expected to have a certain number of characteristics that make it “new”. For example:

- a new⁵ set of teaching activities leading to a degree
- a goal that distinguishes it from existing programs
- a student group with particular needs
- a new program title
- a new program code in the GDEU
- distinct educational objectives
- at least one third of the program credits involving new teaching activities (courses, internships, laboratory work, etc.)

A program including any such characteristics is not necessarily considered to be a new program. It is up to the university to establish that its proposed program is new and that its quality and relevance warrant evaluation.

However, an existing program could be regarded as a new one simply because its wording has changed. The same might apply if an existing program is extended to include more compulsory credits.

The introduction of a new way of completing an existing program⁶ does not usually warrant considering that program to be new in terms of quality and relevance unless it leads to a different degree.

4. University is in the singular throughout the document, even though more than one institution may offer certain programs.

5. A program is considered “new” in relation to the other programs offered by the university hosting the proposed program and not in relation to those offered by the university system as a whole. All programs are listed in the GDEU system.

6. Established by the CREPUQ, the CEP applies the modulated evaluation procedure when, for example, “a university proposes to offer a new program in response to current needs, with content based on existing activities that represent approximately two thirds of the program’s total credits. Existing activities are defined as activities that have been offered as part of a degree program [...] that has been periodically evaluated or accredited or that has been initially evaluated by the Commission d’évaluation des projets de programmes. Other forms of evaluation may also be considered. The conditions pertaining to the full evaluation apply where new research master’s or doctoral programs and “professional” doctoral degrees are concerned. (CREPUQ, Evaluation of New Program Proposals Submitted by Québec Universities: Process and Procedures, 2003, p. 7) The CEP applies the full evaluation procedure when a new program is based on existing activities that represent less than two thirds of the proposed program’s total credits.

To ensure that the students in question continue to receive funding in accordance with budgetary rules, the Ministère is usually informed of changes of this sort, which do not involve a degree modification. This information is then transmitted to the CREPUQ, as agreed.

The Ministère will take into account the considerations listed above when discussing proposed new programs with a university.

→ 3. COMITÉ DES PROGRAMMES UNIVERSITAIRES

3.1 MANDATE

The CPU is a committee that advises the Ministère on the *relevance* of: new university programs leading to bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees; proposals to extend existing programs from one institution to another; and proposals to add partners in order to jointly offer existing programs.

The CPU's responsibilities begin after the CEP has recognized the quality of proposed new programs, as described in the CREPUQ document *Evaluation of New Program Proposals Submitted by Québec Universities: Process and Procedures*⁷.

Based on its evaluation of the relevance of a proposed program, the CPU presents a brief to the Ministère discussing the advisability of funding student enrolled in these programs, along with required investments. A recommendation reflects the consensus opinion of the members of the CPU. The CPU's conclusion is submitted to the Minister as part of a larger dossier, jointly prepared by the Direction générale des affaires universitaires et collégiales (DGAUC — directorate responsible for university and collegiate affairs) and the Direction générale du financement et de l'équipement (DGFE — directorate responsible for funding and equipment), and is forwarded to the Minister.

7. In the case of proposals to extend existing programs to other constituents of the Université du Québec (UQ) or proposals to have two or more UQ constituents jointly host programs already offered in certain UQ constituents, the UQ may submit such proposals directly to the Ministère without the CEP having to conduct a quality analysis beforehand (as per an agreement signed with the Ministère on May 4, 1998).

3.2 COMPOSITION

The Assistant Deputy Minister for Higher Education names eight members to sit on the CPU. Four come from the university milieu and are proposed by the CREPUQ. The other four members come from the Secteur de l'enseignement supérieur (the higher education branch of the Ministère). They are the Director General of the DGAUC, the Director General of the DGFE, the Director of the Direction de l'enseignement et de la recherche universitaires (DERU — directorate responsible for university teaching and research) and the Secretary of the CPU. The Director General of the DGAUC chairs the CPU.

The CPU may invite other persons to participate in its deliberations if it feels that they can make a useful contribution.

3.3 DURATION OF MANDATE

The four members from the university milieu have a renewable three-year mandate.

3.4 INDEPENDENCE OF MEMBERS

The members from the university milieu are appointed for their expertise in the university system. They do not represent their respective institutions. They do not participate in the decision-making process for proposals submitted by their respective institutions. They are not paid for their work as members of the CPU.

3.5 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The CPU usually meets once a month, except in the summer.

➔ 4 PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSING PROGRAM PROPOSALS

4.1 REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

The dossier that the university submits to the CEP is also used for the assessment carried out by the Ministère. It must include the information about the program, such as its title, description and objectives, the number of credits involved, the number of students expected to enrol and graduate, and any other pertinent elements⁸. It must also demonstrate the program's cultural or socioeconomic, systemic, and institutional *relevance*, along with pertinent supporting documents⁹.

After the CEP releases its decision, in order to receive funding for the program, the university must apply to the Minister. A copy of the application is also sent to the Chair of the CPU.

The dossier submitted to the Ministère must also include:

- the CEP evaluation of the quality of the proposal
- evaluations by specialists consulted by the CEP
- the required investment, if any
- the institution's reply to the CEP evaluation, specifying steps to be taken to follow up on its conditions and suggestions, if any. This reply is an integral part of the dossier. In fact, all the elements that show the quality of the proposed program must be included at this point in the process.

8. CREPUQ, *Evaluation of New Program Proposals Submitted by Québec Universities: Process and Procedures*, 2003, pp. 27-28.

9. The CEP does not need this information for a program requiring modulated evaluation. However, a proposal dossier must be submitted to the Ministère.

- if possible, the final updated version of the official program description, incorporating the recommendations contained in the CEP evaluation. The CPU recommendation to the Minister refers to all of the documents sent, including any modifications to those documents.
- duly signed collaborative agreements with other partner institutions, if relevant

Note: Eight copies of the program proposal and supporting documents should be sent to the Chair of the CPU¹⁰.

4.2 ASSESSMENT PROCESS CARRIED OUT BY THE COMITÉ DES PROGRAMMES UNIVERSITAIRES

The Direction de l'enseignement et de la recherche universitaires carries out a preliminary analysis of every dossier, which is then discussed at the CPU. Depending on the nature and complexity of the dossier, the CPU may decide to:

- recommend the funding of students enrolled in the proposed program, and of required investments, if applicable
- request from the DERU a further analysis of the proposal
- invite the institution proposing the program to provide further information, either in writing or during a meeting with the CPU
- consult specialists, organizations or other government departments
- invite a specialist in the field concerned to take part in the program assessment

In the four latter cases, the conclusions of the assessment may be postponed until a future meeting. Once the conclusions have been submitted, the CPU decision is drafted and then approved at the next meeting.

The Chair of the CPU then writes to representatives of the institution to inform them that the CPU has drafted its recommendation. This recommendation must reach the university no more than three months after the date that the complete dossier was received.

10. Public documents available on the university's Web site (calendars, regulations, etc.) need not be included.

4.3 MINISTERIAL DECISION

At the Ministère, the Direction générale des affaires universitaires et collégiales (DGAUC) is responsible for following up on proposals for university degree programs.

When the DGAUC has assembled the required documentation, it collaborates with the DGFE in preparing the final submission to the Minister, of which the CPU decision is an integral part. Finally, the Minister's decision is communicated in writing to the university, with a copy sent to the CREPUQ.

5 CRITERIA OF RELEVANCE

As indicated earlier, the CPU evaluates proposed programs using the criteria of relevance that the Ministère has established: socio-economic or cultural relevance, systemic relevance, and institutional relevance.

5.1 SOCIOECONOMIC OR CULTURAL RELEVANCE

Socioeconomic or cultural relevance refers to the needs that the proposed program intends to meet. This should be understood to mean the consistency between the objectives and results of the proposed program and the social needs the university intends it to fulfill.

This criterion of relevance is judged on the basis of certain elements, including the following:

- the **availability** of a sufficiently detailed needs analysis of the proposed program, including suggested student enrolment
- the evolution of **training requirements** in the field concerned in recent years in Québec and future employment **opportunities**
- identification of the main **prospects** for graduates of the new program (employment, self-employment, opportunities for creativity, career mobility, opportunities for more advanced education) in Québec, Canada and North America; the program's contribution to Québec society in general and to meeting previously identified **needs**

- the **importance** of the sector affected by the proposed program to professional orders, private or public organizations or government departments
- **compliance** with Québec's legislative and regulatory framework for the occupations affected by the proposed program, if applicable
- the **impact** of the proposed program on the evolution of the work force, particularly in Québec
- the existence of programs of this type in **Canada or elsewhere**, their results in terms of enrollment, academic success and the satisfaction of the needs they are designed to meet, if applicable
- the **clarity** of the program title and its **consistency** with program aims

5.2 SYSTEMIC RELEVANCE

The systemic relevance of a proposed program is defined by the way the program fits into university planning as a whole and by its contribution to the orientations and policies of the Québec university system. It is measured by comparing the proposed program with similar or related programs offered by other universities.

Factors to be considered in assessing the systemic relevance of a proposed program include the following:

- the existence of similar programs **in the Québec university system**, in particular the enrollments in those programs; the likely effects of the implementation of the new program on student enrollment in existing programs
- the **distinctive** nature of the proposed program or its specific contribution within the Québec context; how it compares to programs that are already offered (duplication, novelty, etc.)
- any foreseeable **connections** between the proposed program and related programs, and any **collaboration** between professors in the new program and those in related ones, etc.
- **competition** between the proposed program and established programs, including those at the college level, especially within the same region, or **complementarities** with those programs

- **consideration** of the following: information on the concerned area of education, provided by the Commission universitaire sur les programmes and arising from the work of the program follow-up committee established by CREPUQ's Commission des affaires académiques; the orientations of the *Politique québécoise à l'égard des universités* as they bear on the overall university programs offered; and any other applicable ministerial or government policies.

5.3 INSTITUTIONAL RELEVANCE

Institutional relevance means the status of the proposed program in relation to the other programs offered by the university, to the university's achievements, orientations and policies, and to the resources it has at its disposal.

The main elements to be considered in assessing the institutional relevance of a proposed program are the following:

- how the proposed program **fits** into the overall set of programs already offered by the university, within the same field, in related fields and in the sector of education concerned; the **trend** in recent years in the number of enrollments in, and graduates from, related programs; the **impact** of the implementation of the proposed program on student enrollment in these programs at the university
- where advanced degrees are concerned, the **research** and **development** performance of the university in the field of study of the proposed program
- the proposed program's degree of **integration** into the university's mission, its plan, and its focuses of development
- the **availability** of sufficient human and material resources to implement the new program



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